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With EVIL UNITED, Jason McMaster (BROKEN TEETH, WATCHTOWER, IGNITER, DANGEROUS TOYS) can add one more band that's not exactly like any of his current/past bands to that ever-lengthening parenthetical notation of hard rock and heavy metal acts. Rivaled in quality terms — at least in recent years — only by the last BROKEN TEETH album ("Viva la Rock, Fantastico!"), EVIL UNITED's self-titled debut is one hot and thrashing, Texas metal son of a bitch! And it is just different enough — thanks in large part to McMaster's distinctive vocal attack — to set itself apart from the thrash metal mediocrity heap.

In creating this molten metal ruckus, McMaster is joined by bassist Don Van Stavern (RIOT, S.A. SLAYER), drummer Shakes West (MURDERDOLLS, NEUROTICA, SEBASTIAN BACH), and flame-throwing guitarists T.C. Connally (PB/DC, CULT TO FOLLOW) and John Valenzuela (PB/DC, URIAL). You heard the phrase "bringin' it?" Well, this bunch done brought it with 10 butt-kickin' originals, two ominous instrumental interludes ("Dark Serenade" and "Lost Dream"), and a fuel-injected cover of THIN LIZZY's "Massacre". Of the 10 originals, much of what you get is well played, well written, and goddamn electric thrash metal that falls somewhere between OVERKILL and DESTRUCTION, yet with a smattering of dynamics that keeps the



material fresh and flowing at any point along the way. You just can't argue with the methods of annihilation utilized by the group on "Dawn of Armageddon", "Wargod", "Spoonfed", the absolutely murderous "Hexorcism" and blazing opener (complete with SLAYER snippet) "Blasphemer", but neither can you argue with those used on any of the others. Included in that second batch are two rather PANTERA-like cuts in "Speak" and "Rise and Fall of Earth and Man", the former one of several that features McMaster's clever — and sometimes odd — vocal changeups, in this case a falsetto layer on the chorus.

McMaster's vocals do take a bit of getting used to and could stand to be turned down just a smidge in the mix, but ultimately become a staple of the EVIL UNITED sound. Though the most prominent vocal style on the album, McMaster doesn't stick exclusively to his lunatic shriek either, shifting in inflection and range with some regularity. In addition to the above mentioned left turn on "Speak", he also moves into a kind of epic, low register singing on "Wargod" and in somewhat similar manner on "Spoonfed". The low-register layer on the superb "Walking in Sodom" is peculiar, yet still appealing and after a couple of spins you'd not be able to imagine it any other way.

The flaying riffs and pummeling rhythms in combination with smart arranging make **EVIL UNITED**'s debut a beast in uncertain terms, but when you throw in **McMaster**'s vocal treatments it becomes much more of a memorable one. But what makes this album worthwhile is the fact that there isn't bad tune on here. That includes the instrumental pieces, although neither is long enough to have much of an impact anyway. Nitpick if you must and then buy the damn thing. This is genuine, true, and 100 percent Texas metal aggression. That's reason enough.

- Scott Alisoglu

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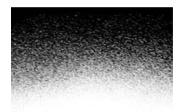




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